

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-07 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00

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P R 270608Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8219

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 4878

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, BX

SUBJECT: BRUNEI DEVELOPMENTS

1. THE GOM NEWS AGENCY BERNAMA JULY 25 REPORTED THAT, ACCORDING TO "AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES" IN BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, BRUNEI WILL SIGN A NEW "FRIENDSHIP TREATY" WITH BRITAIN WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WHICH WILL "MAKE BRUNEI GRADUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR HER EXTERNAL AFFAIRS WHILE BRITAIN WILL CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFENSE." ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, THE NEW AGREEMENT, WHICH WILL REPLACE THE 1971 TREATY GIVING BRITAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR BOTH DEFENSE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, WILL BE SIGNED IN LONDON; THE MOVE "FOLLOWS" RECENT TALKS BETWEEN THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI AND THE BRITISH MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS. THE REPORT ALSO NOTES THAT WITH THE NEW TREATY BRUNEI WILL INTRODUCE THE MINISTERIAL

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SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, ELEVATING THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS TO THE RANK OF MINISTER. THE REPORT CONCLUDES BY NOTING BRUNEI'S EFFORTS IN RECENT YEARS TO REPLACE EXPATRIATES IN THE GOVERNMENT WITH LOCAL MEN AND PREDICTING THAT THE MOST SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT, THE FINANCIAL OFFICER, WILL BE A BRUNEIAN BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

2. ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN KUALA LUMPUR, THIS REPORT IS A "RED HERRING" AND DOES NOT CORRESPOND TO THEIR VIEW OF THE BRUNEI NEGOTIATIONS. THE BRITISH HERE ARE MYSTIFIED BY THE BERNAMA REPORT AND ARE QUERYING THEIR HIGH COMMISSION IN BRUNEI FOR DETAILS OF ITS ORIGIN.

3. COMMENT. WE KNOW THAT BOTH THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI AND HIS FATHER, THE REAL POLITICAL POWER IN THE STATE, WERE RECENTLY IN LONDON FOR TALKS ON THE SULTANATE'S FUTURE, BUT IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WERE NOT PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL. THIS REPORT PROBABLY REPRESENTS A MALAYSIAN ATTEMPT TO PUT PRESSURE ON BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE BRUNEIANS TO MOVE MORE QUICKLY TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE. WE WILL REPORT FURTHER AFTER A DETAILED BRIEFING PROMISED FOR EARLY NEXT WEEK BY THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION AFTER THEIR INVESTIGATION OF THE BERNAMA REPORT.
MILLER

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